

## REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated August 28, 2007. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Initially, the specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised in order to make a number of minor editorial corrections. To facilitate entry of the amendments, a substitute specification and abstract has been prepared. No new matter has been added. Also enclosed is a “marked-up” copy of the original specification and abstract to show the changes that have been incorporated into the substitute specification and abstract. The enclosed copy is entitled “Version with Markings to Show Changes Made.”

By the above amendment, claims 7-19 have been amended to more clearly distinguish the present invention over the prior art. Thus, claims 7-19 are currently pending in the present application.

In the previous Office Action (see pages 2-9), the Examiner rejects the originally filed claims as follows:

claims 7, 8, 10-16 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Guerra et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,860,563); and

claims 9, 17 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Guerra in view of Aten et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,674,652).

It is submitted that the present invention, as embodied by the amended claims, now clearly distinguishes over the Guerra and Aten references for the following reasons.

The present invention, as defined in each of the independent claims, requires, *inter alia*, a

cassette for housing medicine containers in a linear array; and a biasing member for biasing the medicine containers in the cassette toward one end side of the cassette in the linear array state. With the claimed arrangement, the medicine containers can be reliably dispensed one by one, and even if the medicines are contained in a box formed as a rectangular solid, these can be properly dispensed one by one.

**Guerra** discloses a medicine vial dispensing apparatus 10 including a housing 14, and a rotatable dispensing wheel 80 having a plurality of slots 102 formed in the periphery of the wheel. However, the vials are contained in the housing in a random orientation. In particular, the vials are supported on a shelf 72 which moves up and down during operation of the dispensing mechanism 16 to prevent the vials from bridging within the housing. Thus, the Guerra housing (corresponding to the claimed cassette) does not house the vials in a linear array, nor does the Guerra apparatus include a biasing means for biasing the medicine containers toward an end of the cassette while in the linear array. Since the Guerra reference does not meet each and every limitation of independent claims 7 and 11-17, it cannot anticipate these claims under 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

Further, the **Aten** reference is applied by the Examiner to teach a lock member for disabling a rotary discharge member. However, the Aten reference does not disclose or suggest the novel features that are omitted in Guerra. Thus, the collective teachings of the Guerra and Aten references would not result in Applicants' invention as defined in independent claims 7 and 11-17.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Shoji YUYAMA et al.

By:   
Michael S. Huppert  
Registration No. 40,268  
Attorney for Applicants

MSH/kjf  
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021  
Telephone (202) 721-8200  
Facsimile (202) 721-8250  
December 28, 2007